

*Bill and I modified a friend's email to share with our FMC community ---*

## **Strategies for all of us during Covid-19 times —**

### **1. Limit the amount of time you spend checking the news.**

We need to stay informed, but overdoing is not healthy. We can become obsessed with the news, hoping to hear something that will give us a sense of relief. Yet that rarely happens. News often creates more anxiety, fear, and helplessness.

I'm reminded of 9/11, when I watched the plane crash into the towers over and over, until I turned the TV off and went to donate blood. Sadly, blood wasn't needed then, but the camaraderie with other potential donors was healing.

During this crisis, choose to limit time with various news media outlets.

### **2. Commit to exercise and enjoying the outdoors.**

We try to go for a walk each day. Walking around Fresh Pond was frustrating - sharing the paths with too many. However, hiking in Middlesex Fells and other less frequented trails through woods and fields has been great - lots of space to spread out. I'm also enjoying the start of gardening, which always lifts my spirits.

With gyms closed and daylight lengthening, choosing to exercise in sunlight (as we are able) gives a gift to both body and soul.

### **3. Stay present and practice mindfulness.**

We all can get stuck in our "what if," and get frozen in place. When my mind starts fixating on the "what if," I try to get unstuck by answering the question.

Of course, the worst "what if" is, "What if I or a loved one get the virus and die?" Here is the answer I give myself: "If I die, I will have nothing to worry about," and "Heaven forbid someone I love dies, I would have to bear the grief, and life would continue." That answer helps me stop obsessing. Then I remind myself that the chances of the worst happening are low, and I bring my mind back to the present to focus on what I can control.

Being mindful means being fully present and aware of what is happening in the moment. We all can practice more mindfulness and meditation. Jessica is offering FMC a guided relaxation practice twice a week. Try it and other online community meditations.

### **4. Focus on gratitude.**

When we're in crisis, we tend to focus on the negative, which can lead to a general feeling of doom and gloom. When we recognize this happening, we can refocus on what we are thankful for: our health today, family members and friends, the ability to connect with others virtually from home, having food and a place to

rest our heads.

Create your own gratitude list or journal.

### **5. Focus on what you can control.**

When you find yourself caught in the cycle of fear about what is out of our control, refocus on what you can do. Today I again wiped down all the frequently touched surfaces at home. I set up a few Zoom meetings. I'm texting and talking more with family.

Identify what you can do. Then immerse yourself in those things.

### **6. Plan to make the best use of increased time at home.**

Bill and I are brainstorming ways to use this time well. This week we are meeting with an attorney (virtually of course).

We don't have children at home, but many people do. Make a list of ways you can keep your younger kids productive and entertained. Negotiate with the college students who were booted back home. Talk to partners, friends and online resource providers about ideas.

If you have housemates, work with them to build in alone time for each of you.

### **7. Schedule activities.**

When you create a schedule for yourselves and your kids, there is often a greater sense of organization. We are more likely to be productive when we have a schedule. If your children are old enough, they can participate in creating this. It's helpful to have some routine and stick to it. This is what we have control over, and it will help us stay focused on the present.

Post your daily schedule in the kitchen or whichever calendar works best for you.

### **8. Offer to help others.**

There is so much need out there. I call some Meeting friends as well as neighbors to check in. In our town and around the world people are placing teddy bears and signs of encouragement in their windows and in chalk on the sidewalks.

Being concerned and compassionate toward others stops the preoccupation with our own anxieties and puts the focus outside yourself. Connecting with others reminds us we are not alone. We are in this together.

Figure out to whom you can be of service.

### **9. Have virtual dates with friends and family.**

Using Skype, Facetime or Zoom, we can still have a meal and talk, as if we were out to dinner. Connection decreases feelings of isolation and gives us a greater sense of

calm. Take the initiative to make virtual dates with others.

### **9. Care for one another.**

Giving and receiving love is food for the soul.

Continue to help those who are less fortunate in all the ways we can. Prisoners and those in nursing homes can no longer have visitors; send cards and call the ones you know.

For those with partners, now is a great opportunity to connect emotionally, sexually and spiritually.

I'm proud of our son who decided to feed some unemployed workers for free, and to provide others who can pay with takeout/delivery. But he's really worried about how his staff and his restaurant will make it.

So let's all try to find ways to keep our special nonprofit organizations and small businesses going.

### **10. Prepare for the possibility of illness and death.**

Take quiet time to imagine what might happen if you get sick and even if that sickness may lead to death. Bill and I are offering end-of-life workshops to help folks share in supportive small groups about our hopes, fears, and planning. Join us.

Look at our Resource List to find the Health Care Proxy and HIPAA Release Forms. Don't wait until this becomes an urgent matter – you may not be able to manage it then. Do this ASAP. Have those difficult conversations soon with people you will count on to be with you into the final journey we will all take.

Let's hope this pandemic subsides sooner rather than later. In the meantime, use these steps and find ones of your own to help yourself, those who are close to you, and those farther afield to get through this storm.

— Patti Muldoon  
Co-Clerk of Marriage, Family & Relationships